

10-1-1973

Gavin Douglas's Eneados: Dilemmas in the Nature Prologues

Penelope Schott Starkey
Douglas College, Rutgers University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>

 Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Starkey, Penelope Schott (1973) "Gavin Douglas's Eneados: Dilemmas in the Nature Prologues," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 11: Iss. 1, 82–98.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol11/iss1/7>

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

PENELOPE SCHOTT STARKEY

Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*: Dilemmas in the Nature Prologues

Gavin Douglas's *Eneados* is both a translation of Virgil and an independent organic work in its own right. Much of its vigor and general readability comes from the pervasive recognizable presence of the author-translator, especially in those sections where it is not "attachit" to the "staik" (I, Pro., 297) of "Virgillis text" (I, Pro., 299).¹ In the thirteen original prologues and four concluding sections, more than in the translation of Virgil or even the less revered Mapheus, Douglas speaks with an individual voice.² The prologues, especially, modify and comment on the text, completing, as it were, the act of translation.

Of all the prologues, the three so-called nature prologues have received the most attention. Until the twentieth century when Ezra Pound characteristically declared Douglas's translation better than Virgil's original,³ it was primarily on the basis of the nature prologues that the *Eneados* was known at all.⁴

These three prologues with their portraits of winter, spring, and summer, have traditionally been read as an early example of the portrayal

1. Gavin Douglas, *Virgil's Aeneid translated into Scottish Verse*, ed. David F. C. Coldwell (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1957-64), 4 vols. References will be cited in parentheses within the text, indicating book, chapter, and line.

2. Priscilla Bawcutt, "Gavin Douglas and Chaucer," *Review of English Studies*, XXI, (1970), has noted this personal voice. She sees the major influence of Chaucer on Douglas as follows: "He has learnt certain aspects of Chaucer's art, above all, the importance of the narrator."

3. Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. 110.

4. The twelfth prologue was "translated" by Francis Fawkes in the eighteenth century, *Description of May from Gavin Douglas, Bishop of Dunkeld*, 1752 (Edinburgh: Aungervyle Society, 1885). Thomas Warton quoted extensively from the prologues in his *History of English Poetry*, first published 1774-1781. Here he includes most of Prologue XII, supplying a gloss and prose translation, and then, for contrast, gives a prose version of Prologue VII, commenting in summary on "the lively touches of fancy and rural imagination." *History of English Poetry*, ed. W. Carew Hazlitt (1871; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968), III, 225.

of nature for its own sake, an exercise in realism.⁵ Read strictly as nature painting, they have been extravagantly praised⁶ or condemned as conventional.⁷ In both instances they have been seriously misread.

This paper offers a rereading of those prologues in order to show that the nature painting exists not merely for its own sake but in order to lead into certain issues with which Douglas is deeply preoccupied.⁸

Prologues VII, XII, and XIII are, at first reading, rather different from each other, yet they function in many of the same ways. In all three, literary conventions and vignettes of the outside world are the entree and preliminary to the inner world of the poet's mind, a mind

5. Agnes Mure MacKenzie, *Historical Survey of Scottish Literature to 1714* (London: Maclehose, 1933), pp. 102-3, writes: "He is the first poet in our language to take landscape in itself and for itself as a subject." Similarly, Kurt Wittig in *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), p. 85, refers to these prologues as Douglas's "great nature poems, the first in Scots or English in which landscape is depicted solely for its own sake."

6. This is true in works specifically on nature poetry, such as John Veitch, *The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1887), I, 243-82. It is also true in more general treatments. For example, C. S. Lewis, in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 88, writes: "For sheer poetry his best Prologues are the Seventh, Twelfth, and Thirteenth—three nature poems of such discriminating sensibility and effortless technical power that they set us wondering why (in that field) we ever needed a romantic revival."

7. Such condemnation has been directed particularly at the twelfth prologue. John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 2nd ed. 1962), p. 71, emphasizes the conventional aspects of the prologues. "In some respects the 'translation' part might be regarded as more 'original' than at least some passages of the prologues. For Speirs, p. 74, the spring prologue relies too heavily on "'aureate diction'" or "the fashionable rhetoric of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries." He allows it, however, "its occasional particular observation." Charles Blyth, "The Knychtlyke Stile: A Study of Gavin Douglas's *Aeneid*" (Diss., Harvard, 1963), p. 142, sees Prologue XII as a mere catalogue: "The only connection between one item and the next is that both are features of the May scene. No informing dramatic idea emerges out of the details." Later, in "Gavin Douglas' Prologues of Natural Description," *Philological Quarterly*, XLIX (1970), 171, Blyth adds, "Douglas' failure here emphasizes how important the narrator is for connecting the experience presented in medieval narrative poetry."

8. The further uses of Douglas's nature painting have, finally, begun to be recognized. Blyth, *PQ*, 177, writes, "There is remarkably full and charming natural description, but just when we think that the "picturesque" is becoming an end in itself, Douglas turns elsewhere, either to a reminder about the traditional structure of the world, or to a comical dream which disrupts the decorum of later landscape description."

in which a particular set of problems is being grappled with. The central dilemma is one that must have been experienced by many "clerkis" in the Middle Ages, that of the double role of priest and poet.

At the start it is important to remember the risks involved in reading poetry as confessional autobiography or self-revelation. Without evidence outside the work itself, one cannot prove but must settle for demonstrating probabilities. In this case, however, internal evidence is consistent and rather convincing.

One fairly likely probability is that the months described in the nature prologues correspond to their time of composition. (While this seems unremarkable, it can hardly be true for that whole flock of earlier May-morning poems by other poets.) If one plots the course of translation from Douglas's own report in the section called *Tyme, space and dait of the translation of this buke*, the total time elapsed and the two month hiatus during which he "Wrait neuer a word" (*Tyme, space and dait*, 14) indicate such a factual correspondance.⁹ To demonstrate that the purported months of the nature prologues are indeed the actual months of their composition increases the probability that they do in fact function as a kind of diary.

That central problem of Douglas's double role as priest and poet manifests itself in terms of the difficulties of work, sensual distractions, and a persistent desire for literary recognition.¹⁰ Prologue VII, set in winter, shows the writer's depression at the length and weight of his task; Prologue XII, in May, shows the joy of nearing completion along

9. Thomas Ruddiman, editor of *Virgil's Aeneis Translated into Scottish Verse By The Famous Gawin Douglas Bishop of Dunkeld* (Edinburgh: Symson and Freebairn, 1710), p. 16, offers a projected time scheme of composition which uses all the information in *Time, space and dait*, including the two month hiatus. His suggested schedule corresponds with Douglas's apparently increasing ease of composition—as measured by the increased ratio of Scottish to Latin in the later books—and uses as guideposts the seasons of the nature prologues. No other time scheme has been proposed which fits the given information.

10. C. S. Lewis, p. 87, briefly notes the role of the nature prologues as a kind of self-disclosure: "The Prologues have a threefold interest, as poems, as criticism, and as familiar self-portraits of the artist. His habits both in winter and summer, his reading, his difficulties as a translator, his haunting consciousness that a man is not made a bishop in order to translate Virgil, and the excuses which he makes to himself, are here all faithfully set out." While Douglas was not yet a bishop at the time he was translating Virgil, he would subsequently devote much of his energy to becoming one.

with the erotic promise or threat of spring; and Prologue XIII, the June night, dramatizes Douglas's overcoming his religious and scholarly misgivings in order to pursue popular success.

The winter season of Prologue VII, while less familiar than spring, does come within a tradition and have legitimate rhetorical standing. Its theme requires a departure from the *locus amoenus* as decorum requires a setting in keeping with events or mood. Thus, for example, Robert Henryson opens his *Testament of Cresseid* with the lines:

Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairfull dyte
Suld correspond and be equiualent. (11.1-2)¹¹

Winter has been used frequently for its moral and emotional implications;¹² there are both English and Scottish examples which Douglas might have known. In these the instability of seasons is analogous to the instability of life or creative powers.

Chaucer, for a major example, sets his *House of Fame* in winter.¹³

Of Decembre the tenthe day,
Whan hit was nyght, to slepe I lay. (11. 111-12)

In so far as Chaucer's poem is a search for the sources of poetic inspiration, the chill of December, like the desert from which his eagle will rescue him, represents the state of the poet still faced with the difficult poetic task.

Of descriptions of winter in Scottish poetry, the most detailed and "realistic" occur in the work of Robert Henryson, especially in his fable "The Preiching of the Swallow."¹⁴ Here vocabulary and alliteration anticipate Douglas's treatment of the season, and winter is both a reminder of the transience of the things of this world and an analogue to hell.

Another Scottish poet, contemporary with Douglas, William Dunbar, wrote a "Meditatioun in Wyntir" in which winter corresponds to

11. Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, ed. Denton Fox (London: Nelson, 1968).

12. Rosemond Tuve, *Seasons and Months* (Paris: Librarie Universitaire, 1933), p. 181, stresses the moral content of early nature description in English.

13. Geoffrey Chaucer, *Works*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 2nd ed., 1957).

14. Robert Henryson, *The Poems and Fables*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 2nd ed., 1958), especially 11. 1692-1705; and *Moralitas*, 11. 1930-36.

his inability to create.¹⁵ In these "dirk and drublie dayis" nature denies him the "corage" for poetry.

Thus both English and Scottish literary tradition provided models for the winter poem. In many, description is detailed and vivid. The picture is generally cold and wet; hail, sleet, and showers are more prevalent than snow. It is this wet winter of the British Isles which is reflected in Douglas. Often, too, earlier poems register the effects of the weather on animals and men. Here, then, Douglas is not strikingly innovative in subject or descriptive style, but rather for the personal response evoked by the season.

The position of this prologue between hell and dawn, brought about by Douglas's shift of book divisions, corresponds well with the mood portrayed. The movement from hell to the coming struggle in Italy is paralleled by the poet's own struggle to complete his work. While more than half of the 168 lines are descriptive of the winter scenery, the greater part of such description occurs in the first half and serves as a prelude to other matters.

After an elaborate mythological and astronomical opening, the scene is presented: the flooded rivers run brown, all is wet or frozen, "Bewte was lost, and barrand schew the landis" (VII, Pro., 41). Then there is the direct analogy:

Seir bittir bubbis, and the schowris snell,
Semyt on the sward a similitude of hell. (VII, Pro., 42-43)

The association of winter and hell might be due to the old Northern conception of hell as cold or to the shadowy aspect of winter gloom,¹⁶ but a still more convincing relationship may be found between hell and this winter. The brown, mudladen streams encroaching on their banks, the "feirful" lightning above the "sleit" and "snypan and snaw" all represent a confusion of the four elements.¹⁷ Just as the streams should not overrun the earth, fire and water should not come simultaneously from the same sky. This scene, contrary to all principles of natural order, is a violation of divine law and therefore hellish.

15. William Dunbar, *Poems*, ed. James Kinsley (London: Oxford University Press, 1958); the subject of creative powers is discussed by Tom Scott in *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), pp. 245-46.

16. Lauchlan Maclean Watt, *Douglas's Aeneid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 107.

17. This was first pointed out to me in conversation by Helena Mennie Shire.

The prologue continues with an elaborate picture, too inclusive to be a strictly accurate portrait of a single place or time,¹⁸ but rather an impressionistic re-creation, a deliberate construction. Although composed of individually observable details, it is not merely the product of an aesthetic pleasure in landscape, but background for an examination of Douglas's problems in writing.¹⁹

Having described inanimate nature, Douglas then describes birds hiding from the tempest, domestic animals in shelter, other people, and then himself. Men sit by the fire with warm clothing and warming drink. These details may well be realistic, yet the poet remains within a tradition. Such winter tableaux appear in the illustrations to various Books of Hours; closer to Douglas, in Chaucer's "Franklin's Tale";²⁰

Janus sit by the fyr, wthi double berd,
And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn: (ll. 1252-53)

and, still closer, in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* where:

I mend the fyre and beikit me about
Than tuik ane drink my spreitis to comfort
And armit me weill fra the cauld thairout. (ll. 36-38)

Having warmed himself in good traditional fashion, Douglas goes to bed, crosses himself, and sleeps. He awakens to the cries of various birds. Although they are all legitimate Scottish birds, the poet goes beyond naturalism when he describes the cranes as

Palamedes byrdis crowpyng in the sky,
Fleand on randon, schapyn lyke ane Y. (VII, Pro., 119-20)

Because this "Y" has been identified with the golden bough and with "integrity,"²¹ its use here both ties the prologue to the underworld

18. This has been noted by John Veitch, I, 275; C. S. Lewis, p. 87; and Kurt Wittig, p. 87: "This is not really a description of winter: it is rather the evocation of a winter mood."

19. Such portrayal of landscape in order to make another point is similar to the use of scenery in the romantic lyrics discussed by M. H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," *From Sensibility to Romanticism*, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 528: "the visual report is invariably the occasion for a meditation which turns out to constitute the *raison d'être* of the poem." Douglas's topographical approach to his inner concerns represents a sequential variation of the "interfusion of mind and nature" described by Abrams, p. 551.

20. Rosemond Tuve, p. 185, traces back to the portrayal of the months in the Books of Hours Chaucer's description of Janus in the "Franklin's Tale," where:

21. Bawcutt, *RES*, 408-9 finds in these lines possible allusions to Chaucer

Ergo per ramum virtutes dicit esse sectandas,
 qui est Y litterae imitatio, quem ideo in silvis
 dicit latere, quia re vera in huius vitae confusione
 et maiore parte vitiorum virtutis integritas latet.

Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E.F.M. Benecke (New York: Stechert, 1929), p. 58.

visit of Book VI and suggests Douglas's concern for the *integritas* of completing his work.

Once awakened by the birds, he goes to the window, looks out at the barren landscape, then turns to his desk.

And, as I bownyt me to the fyre me by,
 Baith vp and down the howss I dyd aspy,
 And seand Virgill on a lettron stand,
 To write onone I hynt a pen in hand,
 Fortil perform the poet grave and sad,
 Quham sa fer furth or then begun I had,
 And wolx ennoyt sum deill in my hart
 Thar restit oncompletit sa great a part. (VII, Pro., 141-48)

In a sense, all of the prologue has led up to this point. The physical winter corresponds to the poet's discontent: even in completing Book VI he has not emerged from hell. He is only half done and the harsh season reflects the difficulties of creation ahead.

The poet urges himself on in colloquial terms:

And to myself I said: "In gud effect
 Thou mon draw furth, the gok lyis on thy nek."
 (VII, Pro., 149-50)

He feels the yoke because "Na thing is done quhil ocht remanys ado." Yet he has been delayed in his work by other obligations:

For byssnyes, quhilk occurrit on cace,
 Ourvoluyt I this volume, lay a space. (VII, Pro., 153-54)

There is at least some reason to believe that Douglas lacked time for

(21 *cont'd.*)

(Parliament of Fowls, l. 344), an epigram of Martial's, and X, 265 in the *Aeneid* itself. Both Coldwell, I, 205, and Ruddiman, Glossary, S.V.Y. refer to the invention of letters by Palamedes in imitation of the patterns made by the birds. But in Virgilian tradition, the Y is supposed to correspond as well to the golden branch which Aeneas carries into Hades. This is developed in the Commentary by Servius from which Douglas borrowed heavily. In his commentary on *Aeneid* VI, 186, where Aeneas gazes on a vast forest wondering how he will locate the golden bough, Servius writes:

both work and poetry, did not have the "mare lasere" stipulated in his earlier *Palice of Honour*.²² Just before he would have got underway

Twychand this buke perauentur ȝe sall here
Sumtyme efter quhen I haue mare lasere. (III, 1756-57)

on his translation, in February 1511, it is reported that Douglas, then prebendary of St. Giles, had neglected to celebrate the Mass of the Holy Blood and subsequently bound himself to celebrate it every Wednesday under penalty of fine.²³ Most likely his time problems continued or increased and such an incident may well forecast conflict between two vocations.

Nevertheless, despite other "byssness" "me list not tyre . . . Or ȝit to stynt for bitter storm or raine" (VII, Pro., 155; 157) and he will finish.

Finally the true subject of this prologue is the poet and his work. In his artistic life the winter is equivalent to the mystic's dark night of the soul; it is that which must be survived to reach a goal. His later resistance to Mapheus Vegius's suggestion that he translate Book XIII as well will be due to the same sort of fatigue and doubt about the suitability of the work to his position. Having taken to heart the idea that "ane doolie sessoun" suits a tale of woe, Douglas portrays winter for more than pictorial realism. In this case the woe is that of the poet-translator with several books of battle ahead.

He will "ȝok our pleuch agane" (VII, Pro., 158) and the next book will be begun "Quhen frostis doith ourfret baith firth and fald" (VII, Pro., 162), in the face of external and internal winter.

The final evidence that this seventh prologue is more than nature painting is a concluding address *to* the prologue, stressing its position between hell and the Italian wars, and showing the entire prologue as a kind of artifact:

Thys proloug smellis new cum furth of hell,
And, as our buk begouth hys weifair tell,
So weill according dewly bene annext
Thou drery preambill, with a bludy text.

22. In the *Palice of Honour*, in *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1967), Douglas is asked by Venus to "put in Rhyme" (III, 1752) the book she hands him, that is, the *Aeneid*. His promise is contingent.

23. R. L. Mackie, *King James IV of Scotland, A Brief Survey of his Life and Times* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), pp. 182-83.

Of sabyll be thy lettyris illumynate,
According to thy process and estait. (VII, Pro., 163-168)

In this self-conscious ending, Douglas visualizes the appropriate illumination of his work — a big, black initial and all the lettering suitably somber. Clearly this prologue is not the product of naive response to and imitation of whatever comes before the poet's eyes. It is instead a deliberate mood piece reflecting Douglas's own struggle for completion and poetic virtuosity.

The twelfth prologue, set in May, also exhibits pride of craft. Where it seems to run to excess, it has been shaped by a need to include everything that has ever been in a May poem.²⁴ The aureate opening includes at least twelve pagan deities and the usual plethora of precious stones. With all this splendor, it takes 72 lines to say that the sun came up and another 78 to say that there were a great many flowers.

Of the three nature prologues, this is the most conventional but even here Douglas uses convention so as to point up highly individual concerns. Much of the opening is an expansion of the prologue to Douglas's own *Palice of Honour* and here, too, we see the quest for legitimate motivations and honor.²⁵ He wishes to display his own poetic abilities, he is patriotically concerned with Scotland and the poetic resources of "Scottis" — note that the prologue is set on May 9, traditionally celebrated as St. Andrew's day — and, again, he is worried about his double role as priest and poet. Here in May there occurs an extension of that conflict: the dangers and lures of sexual love.

The exotic aureate atmosphere is domesticated as "Nymphes and Naedes,/ Sik as we clepe wenschis and damysellis" (XII, Pro., 188-89) sing love songs, after which occurs a dramatic dialogue of "Bawdry" (XII, Pro., 210). The two speakers of the dialogue are never identified but exist as part of the May scene. Their intent requires no explanation.

Smyland says ane, "I couth in previte
Schaw the a bovrde." "Ha, quhat be that?" quod he,

24. Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1963), p. 195, notes that as early as the time of Ovid, "descriptions of nature become bravura interludes in which poets try to outdo one another."

25. The *Palice of Honour* is likewise concerned with its own virtuosity. While it traces the poet's quest for true and lasting honor, it manifests his desire for poetic honors in this world as well.

"Quhat thyng?" "That most be secrete," said the tother.
(XII, Pro., 213-15)

Agreed to secrecy, the two decide to go for a walk that evening to keep some sort of assignation:

"Do choyss the ane, and I sall quynch the lycht."
"I salbe thar I hope," quod he and lewch,
"3a, now I knaw the mater weill eneuch." (XII, ro., 222-24)

Douglas rushes to condemn "this schamefull play,/ Na thyng accordyng to our hailsum May" (XII, Pro., 225-26). Fortunately for the picture he meant to present, he could not have anticipated that later researchers would uncover the probable existence of his illegitimate offspring.²⁶

Having disavowed this overly lusty affirmation of spring, the poet returns to the safer subject of birds who sing a welcome to Nature much like that in the *Parliament of Fowls*. Finally, at line 267, the "I" enters the poem as Douglas is awakened by the birds' song:

And with this word, in chalmer quhar I lay,
The nynt morow of fresch temperit May,
On fut I sprent, into my bair sark,
Wilfull fortill compleit my langsum wark
Twichand the latty buke of Dan Virgill,
Quhilk me had tareit al to lang a quhile. (XII, Pro., 267-72)

Convinced that he has already spent too much time on this project, he is anxious to get to the last book. The birds call lovers to love and the translator to his translation. Hearing the amorous call of the dove, Douglas is disturbed by "hir wanton cry" (XII, Pro., 301) and cannot bear to lie in bed. The next few lines epitomize his alternatives and his provisional resolution. Lover, priest, and poet are transparently at war within him. Having rejected the lover, he tries for the priest, but — by chance or design — it is too early for mass, and so he becomes, after all, the poet:

I irkyt of my bed, and mycht not ly
Bot gan me blyss, syne in my wedis dress
And, for it was ayr morow, or tyme of mess
I hynt a scriptour and my pen furth tuke,
Syne thus begouth of Virgill the twelt buke. (XII, Pro., 302-6)

26. In the lengthy introduction to his edition of *The Poetical Works of Gavin Douglas* (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1874), I, cxxv, John Small refers to an illegitimate daughter. Mary Ringsleben in "Gavin Douglas: A revaluation" (Diss., University of Aberdeen, 1955), Appendix B, iv-x, seeks to establish that this daughter, Margaret, was more likely the child of Gavin's older brother George.

It is this relationship of the man to his work which shapes these nature prologues. The actual description of May is slighted in this discussion because the prologue becomes most interesting with the entrance of the poet.

The long aureate description is interesting primarily for what it reveals of Douglas's poetic aspirations. Douglas is clearly impressed with his prologue and does not fail to compliment himself.

Explicit scitus prologus,
Quharof the autour says thus:

The lusty crafty preambill, "perle of May"
I the entitil, crownyt quhil domysday,
And al with gold, in syng of stait ryall
Most beyn illumnyt thy letteris capital. (XII, Pro., 307-10)

Here there can be no question of taking the prologue as pure nature-appreciation. It is rather a final grand flourish before the translator settles down to complete his great task. He has given up all else for his work and truly hopes that it will outlive him and last until "domys-day."

The thirteenth prologue, the last of the nature prologues, is necessarily closely tied to the whole problem of the thirteenth book. This un-Virgilian addition, composed by Mapheus Vegius in the fifteenth century, was tremendously popular and was included in many printed editions of the period. It seems to have answered a medieval dissatisfaction with the abrupt death of Turnus. Presumably Virgil's first readers had the fact of the empire as living conclusion, but after its disintegration the poem seemed incomplete; therefore the addition. Mapheus, in his rather un-Virgilian Latin hexameters, tells *how* the "And they lived happily ever after" really went. Peace is concluded, Aeneas marries Lavinia — indeed, the wedding night is rather salacious in Douglas's version — and then at the appropriate time Aeneas is translated to heaven; a conclusion devoutly to be wished for and eminently satisfactory.

In retrospect one is not surprised that Douglas decided to include this book in his translation, but, apparently, he had not originally planned to do so. After Turnus's spirit "under dyrk erth is goyn" (XII, xiv, 154), Douglas seems to think he too is finished and adds two short sections by way of signature. First he lists "hys pryncipall warkis" and then, in a little verbal puzzle, spells out his name. He has succeeded in translating all of Virgil and is, deservedly, pleased.

What, then, happened between the end of Book XII and the start of Book XIII to make Douglas change his mind and go on? There are at least two reasons which might have prompted the continuation: first, despite his own regard for the classics and his better critical judgment, he himself seems to have had a certain fondness for the spurious book with all its circumstantial detail, and second, he may have decided that for popular vernacular appeal he should include the fifteenth century additional book. Either of these two possible reasons might breed uneasiness in the poet.

Whatever the reason for the continuation, the prologue to Book XIII, too long regarded as a "nature" poem, is actually an elaborate and rather humorous justification for the inclusion of Book XIII itself.²⁷

It opens with the speaker present. On a warm June evening, "I walkyt furth abowt the feildis tyte" (XIII, Pro., 5). He describes the natural delights, including

byrdis and byssy beys,
In amerant medis fleand est and west,
Eftir laubour to tak the nychtis rest. (XIII, Pro., 8-10)

The idea of rest after labor is important, extending to Douglas's desire to rest after his many months of translating.

Carefully described are the coming of evening and the birds preparing for the night.

Vpgois the bak with hir pelit ledderyn flycht,
The lark discendis from the skyis hycht,
Syngand hir complyng sang, efter hir gyss,
To tak hir rest, at matyn hour to ryss. (XIII, Pro., 33-36)

Notice here how the rhythm of the birds is a natural analogue to the religious day, suggesting the rightness of their behavior and perhaps reminding us that Douglas is a Churchman.

So all prepare for "the hailsum nychtis rest" (XIII, Pro., 46). The only exceptions to this natural inclination are the nightingale and the poet, and as the poet, seated in the garden, listens to the nightingale, he too slips into sleep.

Now, poets sleeping in gardens are very prone to dreaming, and at this point it becomes clear that the nature painting of the opening 75 lines has served as introduction to a vision:

27. Bawcutt, *RES*, 415, comments on the function of this prologue as, "Douglas's apologia for translating something that he knows—and he wants us to know—is not Virgil's at all."

schortly, thar as I was lenyt doun
 For nychtis silens, and this byrdis sovn,
 On sleip I slaid, quhar sone I saw appeir
 An agit man, (XIII, Pro., 73-76)

The man is of course Mapheus Vegius, and the rest of the prologue is an explanation of the circumstances which lead Douglas to add the thirteenth book.

The dream vision as we know it in Chaucer and others offers many instances in which someone appears to the dreamer. Within the tradition of dramatic and didactic personal appearances, there is a kind of sub-genre in which the person who appears to the dreamer is specifically another poet. Also not without precedent is occasional disagreement between the dreamer and the apparition. The "other poet" and the element of conflict both contribute to the surprising development of this thirteenth prologue.

Such episodes occur frequently in Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* and its English version, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. From the first "fall," that of Adam, there are dramatic entrances, requests, and even disagreements. When, for example, a Frankish queen complains that she has been neglected and disagrees with the poet over the facts of her story, he registers a disclaimer but records it as she tells it.²⁸ Thus the apparition wins out over an author who claims to have been coerced. The attendant humor seems deliberate.

Boccaccio and Lydgate also have an interview between poets. When Boccaccio has completed seven books of *De casibus* and is tempted to quit, Petrarch appears, crowned with laurel, to urge continuation.²⁹ As a spiritual director reminiscent of Dante's Virgil, he reproaches Boccaccio for sloth and insists on the moral uses of literature. After Petrarch's "lessoun" "Bochas vndertook/ For tacomplisshe up his eihte book" (VIII, 188-89).

Lydgate, in his retelling, adds two original stanzas which emphasize the need to continue, even in the face of fatigue and the approach of old age.³⁰ Douglas, too, suffers from such fatigue, and as is apparent in his *Conclusio* and elsewhere, worries over the passage and use of time.

28. John Lydgate, *The Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (London: Early English Text Society, 1924-1927), IX, 162-476.

29. Lydgate, VIII, 57-63.

30. Lydgate, VIII, 190-203.

While Douglas would have been familiar with Lydgate, there is another work closer to home which offers parallels to the appearance of Mapheus. The device of the encounter between writers is used by Henryson in the prologue preceding his fable of "The lion and the mouse."³¹ Here the May-motif of the traditional dream is transformed to June, just as a June evening will provide the setting for Douglas's encounter prologue. As Henryson sleeps in a garden, the fabulist Aesop appears, dressed in clothes "off the auld fassoun" (1.1353).

Once Aesop has identified himself, the two writers converse. Their interaction is the usual relationship of reverence. Are you not, asks Henryson, he who wrote those fables which, though "feneit," are full of wisdom?

"Fair sone" (said he), "I am the samin man" (1.1382). I dwell on certain of these details because they are adopted for Douglas's encounter with Mapheus. Within the wider tradition, Henryson is clearly the immediate model.

The important aspect, however, is not the similarities but the differences. While Henryson respectfully requests that Aesop tell a fable, in Douglas's prologue the situation is completely reversed; Mapheus is angry, it is he who makes a request, that request is escalated to a demand, and the resolution is anything but amicable.

Initially hostile, Mapheus asks:

Quhat dois thou heir
Vndyr my tre, and willyst me na gude? (XIII, Pro., 76-77)

Douglas looks up to see the speaker dressed in shabby clothes of approximately forty years ago. (Mapheus died in 1458, so the time estimate is relatively accurate.)

And on his hed of lawrer tre a crown,
Lyke to sum poet of the ald fasson (XIII, Pro., 87-88)

Sternly, the apparition identifies himself and his work.

"Knawis thou not Mapheus Vegius, the poet,
That onto Virgillis lusty bukis sweit
The thretteyn buke ekit Eneadan?" (XIII, Pro., 99-101)

Then, echoing Henryson's Aesop, he adds, "I am the sammyn" (XIII, Pro., 102).

31. Henryson, ed. Wood.

He explains that he is angry because Douglas has translated Virgil's twelve books so that "thai may be red and song/Our Albyon ile into 3our wlgar leid;" (XIII, Pro., 104-5) but has neglected *his* book. The phrase, a paraphrase of part of Ovid's conclusion to his *Metamorphoses*,³² is used again by Douglas in the *Conclusio* in which he eval-

quaque pater domitis Romana potentia teris,
ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama,
suquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

uates his completed work:

Throw owt the ile yclepit Albyon
Red sall I be, and sung with mony one. (*Conclusio*, 11-12)

Thus Douglas, in this prologue, puts into the mouth of Mapheus his own desire for lasting fame.

But, for the moment, Douglas refuses to translate Mapheus's book because he has his "Tyme mysspendit" (XIII, Pro., 110) on Virgil and "laid on syde full mony grave mater" (XIII, Pro., 112). Such lingering doubts are the counterpart to his repeated avowals elsewhere concerning the moral worth and theological validity of Virgil's poetry, and show his continuing ambivalence.

He further adds, in the words of Ascensius's commentary on the *Aeneid*, that the thirteenth book no more belongs "than langis to the cart the fift quheill" (XIII, Pro., 118). This objection is soon passed over, however, because in actuality the book accords with his own reading of the epic.

Douglas is much more bothered by the problem of devoting his time to secular literature and returns to it by way of Saint Jerome. Even after Jerome had turned to monasticism, he could not give up his love for the pagan classics until the spirit of God accused him in a dream of being a "Ciceronian" instead of a Christian. Jerome woke from the dream with livid marks on his shoulders and thereafter studied only divine books. Douglas refers to this episode with particular emphasis on the bruises:

I wait the story of Iherom is to ȝou kend,
Quhou he was dung and beft intill hys sleip,
For he to gentilis bukis gaif sik kep. (XIII, Pro., 122-24)

To these religious qualms, Mapheus is scornfully unsympathetic, accus-

32. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), XV, 877-79:

ing Douglas of "Fenzeand hym Iherom forto contyrfeit" (XIII, Pro., 135).

Having questioned Douglas's sincerity, Mapheus goes on to assert the worth of his own "schort Cristyn wark" (XIII, Pro., 140). Therefore the translator should "len me a fourteyn nycht" (XIII, Pro., 143) and translate his book as well, or else, he adds, "Thou salt deir by that evir thou Virgill knew" (XIII, Pro., 145). But in this encounter between poets, the apparition does more than advise, urge or even threaten. In a dramatic wrenching of tradition, Douglas leads him into action.

And, with that word, doun of the sete me drew,
Syne to me with hys club he maid a braid,
And twenty rowtis apon my riggyng laid. (XIII, Pro., 146-48)

Mapheus beats Douglas across the back until:

"Deo, Deo, mercy," did I cry,
And, by my ryght hand strekit vp inhy,
Hecht to translait his buke, in honour of God
And hys Apostolis twelf, in the number od. (XIII, Pro., 149-52)

Having portrayed himself as beaten into compliance, Douglas assuages his doubts by finding the figurative meaning in the number thirteen.

The whole scene is a comic perversion of the tradition of the "reproachful beloved" or revered teacher returning to chide the sleeping poet. The encounter between writers has taken on the drama of dispute. Traditionally the dead writer had been loved and revered and his message had been spiritual, though even in Henryson the apparition was rather more of this world. Finally, as Douglas uses the motif, the apparition heaves up a very material club and carries the day not by divine inspiration but by twenty solid blows across his back. Thus, for personal justification, Douglas reinterprets the inherited pattern.

Now Douglas returns to his famous nature-painting, but with a difference. The delicately portrayed dawn is intended as setting for the return to work. Douglas will keep his promise and return to his task of translation, always hoping soon to "cloyss our buke,/ That I may syne bot on grave materis luke" (XIII, Pro., 187-88). Even near the end of his translation, he remains plagued by moral doubt about the suitability of his task. And after four concluding sections, that question will remain unresolved for him.

But for now Douglas returns to the less ambiguous values of his translation. He will include Book XIII even though it is un-Virgilian,

since "Full weill I wayt my text sall mony like" (XIII, Pro., 190). Ultimately he has opted for popular appeal. In fact, of course, he sides with Mapheus on the inclusion of Book XIII; having created a fictional external compulsion, he then defends his "forced" decision. The book is not classical, it may or may not be morally valuable, but without question it will attract a wide audience. And so the thirteenth prologue becomes more than an exercise in nature-description, fine as that is; instead it is an elaborate justification and excuse for the pursuit of popular success.

We see, then, that all three of the so-called nature prologues offer more than picturesque description. Their earlier reputation is by no means undeserved; Douglas does delight in the physical manifestations, stark or beautiful, of the natural world. But at the same time they provide a conventional framework in which Douglas reveals and attempts to work out his own conflicts and goals.

Douglas's problem lies in his delight in earthly life in all its aspects and his Christian need to reject the world. The final emptiness of earthly joy sounds through others of the prologues like a refrain: "All erdly glaidness fynsith with wo" (II, Pro., 21); "Temporal ioy endis with wo and pane" (IV, Pro., 221); "Sen erdlie plesour endis oft with sorrow, we see" (V Pro., 62). It is his dilemma to believe this but to find earthly things appealing. Although he would "contemp the wrachit warld onstabill" (XIII, xi, 56), he persists in believing in the value of literature and his own fame.

And this issue, the conflict of vocation and the desire for literary fame, animates the conventions of the nature prologues.

*Douglass College,
Rutgers University*